

1991

Iannone, Carol: News Articles (1991): News Article 45

Barbara Gamarekian

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_I_36

Recommended Citation

Gamarekian, Barbara, "Iannone, Carol: News Articles (1991): News Article 45" (1991). *Iannone, Carol: News Articles (1991)*. Paper 43.
http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_I_36/43

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Education: National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, Subject Files I (1973-1996) at DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Iannone, Carol: News Articles (1991) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu.

Humanities Nominee Rejected in Senate

By BARBARA GAMAREKIAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 17 — After a brief, tense debate, the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee today rejected by one vote the controversial nomination of Carol Iannone to the advisory council for the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Nominations to the council — like all Presidential nominations, they are subject to a Senate committee's approval — are typically routine. But the nomination of Ms. Iannone, a literature teacher at New York University with outspokenly conservative views, has attracted extraordinary attention. It has been opposed by some lawmakers and scholarly organizations and debated in editorials and by newspaper columnists as well as on Capitol Hill.

"It just escalated," Senator Claiborne Pell, Democrat of Rhode Island, said today after the vote. "She had become a shuttlecock between the conservative establishment and the liberal establishment."

Senator Pell, a committee member and one of the endowment's founders, spoke against the nomination. He said that Ms. Iannone should be disqualified not for her political views but for her lack of academic credentials. The statutory language of the endowment specifically calls for council members who have established records of

During today's debate, the committee's cochairmen, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, and Senator Orrin G. Hatch, Republican of Utah, engaged in an often fiery exchange.

Senator Kennedy, waving Ms. Iannone's dossier, compared the relatively short list of her scholarly writings with the wealth of material assembled for the two other candidates.

In response, Senator Hatch said: "You don't determine these positions by the weight of the pages. I think you could list a lot of people who are considered the greatest writers, thinkers, critics and literary geniuses in the field who didn't even begin to write until after they were her age, 43. She brings to the council 20 years of teaching."

At another point, Senator Hatch, his voice rising in frustration, said, "If this is not political correctness, what is it? My gosh, it's one thing having these nutcakes out there acting like academics and acting like they know a lot about intellectual life."

"What was that word again?" interjected Senator Kennedy with a grin.

Largely a Party-Line Vote

"Nutcakes," reiterated Senator Hatch to rising laughter in the hearing room, "and I have not as yet used that word to describe anyone on this committee."

"She comes from a first-generation immigrant working-class family," Mr. Hatch continued. "She's a woman. It is tougher in those early years in academics for women and anybody who doesn't believe that doesn't know what is going on."

"Ideology is not the issue," said Senator Kennedy. "Political correctness is not the issue. Numerous distinguished nominees with conservative backgrounds have been confirmed to the council in the past, as they will continue to be confirmed in the future."

The 9-to-8 vote was largely along party lines, with Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico the only Democrat to vote in support of the nomination. "I was not persuaded that anything I saw was adequate to disqualify her from serving in that capacity," said Senator Bingaman after the hearing.

Lynne Cheney, chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, had made Ms. Iannone's nomination something of a cause célèbre, arguing the nominee's case in op-ed page articles and escorting her on personal visits to the hill seeking votes.

Reaction by Iannone

In a statement today, Mrs. Cheney said: "Carol Iannone is a fine scholar and a fine person, as all the Republicans and one Democrat on the committee realized. It is a great disappointment that the rest of the Democrats voted her down. Moreover, her nomination has raised vital First Amendment issues and this vote will be widely seen as sanctioning limits on free expression. That should be of concern to all Americans, both on and off our campuses."

Ms. Iannone expressed surprise at the vote, suggesting that it was more ideological than based on her scholarly credentials. "I am surprised that Senator Kennedy made qualifications the issue because when I met with

Humanities Nominee Rejected In Senate

Continued From Page C15

him he said qualifications were not of concern to him because academic politics were the nastiest kind."

Referring to another committee member, Senator Barbara A. Mikulski, Democrat of Maryland, Ms. Iannone continued: "Barbara Mikulski said she was a populist when it came to credentials, that she didn't go for academic snobbery."

Joel Conarroe, president of the Guggenheim Foundation, who had strongly opposed the nomination, said in a telephone interview that he felt the "right decision" had been made. "I think the Senators realize there are criteria for such an appointment and this nominee does not meet this criteria of scholarly distinction."

Phyllis Franklin, executive director of the Modern Language Association of America, whose board had opposed the Iannone nomination for lack of scholarly credentials, also welcomed the vote, saying, "We are grateful to members of the committee who took our concern seriously."

"We were particularly concerned," she added, "because nine members are due to cycle off the council next year, among them many distinguished members, and we were afraid this nomination would set the base line for next year's nominees."

The two other nominations to the council — Michael J. Malbin of the State University at Albany and Harvey C. Mansfield Jr. of Harvard University — were approved without debate.

A usually routine committee vote turns into a fiery debate over credentials.

distinguished service and scholarship or creativity, he said. "In my view," said Senator Pell, "she comes up short on each of these points."

Ms. Iannone was nominated to the 26-member National Council, which advises the Humanities Endowment on what programs deserve Federal money, by President Bush last January. A number of scholarly organizations, including the Modern Language Association of America and the American Council of Learned Societies, opposed the nomination, arguing that she had not undertaken any major scholarly studies or done any significant writing since completing her Ph.D. degree 10 years ago.

Ms. Iannone's literary reviews have also become controversial. In a recent essay in *Commentary*, she charged that a number of prize-winning novels by blacks had been honored not because of their literary qualities but because of their authors' race.

A number of prominent scholars have strongly defended Ms. Iannone, too. Among those who endorsed her nomination were Jacques Barzun, professor emeritus at Columbia University; Gertrude Himmelfarb, professor emerita at the City University of New York; Donald Kagan, dean of Yale College, and Joseph Epstein, professor of English at Northwestern University.

Continued on Page C17